United Nations S/PV.6008

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

6008th meeting

Thursday, 30 October 2008, 10.25 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Koudougou
	Costa Rica	Mr. Ballestero
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bayley
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2008/654)

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08-57736 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2008/654)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Lebanon, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Salam (Lebanon) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004).

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Roed-Larsen to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/654, which contains the eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004). I now give the floor to Mr. Roed-Larsen.

Mr. Roed-Larsen: Four years ago, this Council passed resolution 1559 (2004). Today I will, on behalf of the Secretary-General, use the opportunity to recall the spirit and objectives of that resolution.

The main objective of resolution 1559 (2004) is to reaffirm the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon. For that purpose, it calls for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country and the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

The requirements of the resolution are merely a reflection of — or literally quotations from — the very provisions of the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon committed. As such, resolution 1559 (2004) is a mechanism of the Security Council supporting the principles that the Lebanese committed themselves to in 1989. The understanding reached in the Taif Accords ended the civil war. It also stipulated that all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias should disband and disarm. It led, at the time, to Lebanese militias — with the exception of Hizbullah — giving up their armed capacities.

I am pleased, in that context, to report that recent opinion polls conducted in Lebanon show massive support for the work of the United Nations in Lebanon. The results emphasize in particular that the vast majority of the population favours the implementation of all the provisions of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), including the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

I am delighted to report that the Lebanese leaders re-affirmed, in Doha, in May this year, their commitment to the Taif Accords.

In the same spirit, in its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to establish full diplomatic relations and to delineate their common border. That reflects and arises from the requirements of resolution 1559 (2004) and is, as such, merely a road map towards affirming Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) in September 2004, several of its provisions have now been implemented. The Secretary-General was able to certify that free and credible parliamentary elections

had taken place in early 2005. The same conclusion applied to the withdrawal of Syrian troops, military assets and military intelligence apparatus from Lebanon.

Today, I am glad to report major strides over the past six months towards the full implementation of the requirements of resolution 1559 (2004). The most significant progress made in the implementation of the resolution during the reporting period has been compliance with its requirement for a free and fair presidential election according to Lebanese constitutional rules, as called for repeatedly by the Security Council since 2004. I am indeed pleased to report that the election of the President has revived the constitutional political process in Lebanon. That relates in particular to the convening of Parliament, which, as the Council knows, was paralysed for almost two years.

On 30 September the Lebanese Parliament adopted a new electoral law based on the agreement reached in Doha in May. The new law paves the way for holding parliamentary election next spring.

Lebanon and Syria have engaged in high-level talks on matters of relevance to Lebanon's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity. On 14 August, the Lebanese and Syrian Presidents concluded two days of talks in Damascus with the release of a joint statement announcing the agreement of the two States to establish diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. That led to the signing of a memorandum between the Foreign Ministers of Syria and Lebanon, in Damascus on 15 October, announcing the establishment of diplomatic relations, effective the same day. That agreement also announced the two countries' determination to reinforce and consolidate their relations on the basis of mutual respect for their sovereignty and independence.

We are looking forward to close adherence to that understanding and the opening of embassies in Beirut and Damascus by the end of the year. The Secretary-General applauds the historic steps that have been taken so far by Presidents Sleiman and Al-Assad towards that goal. For the first time since their independence, the two neighbouring States are establishing diplomatic relations. Those developments seem to signal that a new page has been opened in the relations between the two countries. In that context, the Secretary-General pays tribute to the personal efforts deployed by President Sarkozy of France in convincing the parties to make significant headway on the matter.

The Secretary-General has also maintained his efforts to encourage Syria and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. There was no significant progress on that matter during the reporting period. Accordingly, we welcome the renewed intention of Syria and Lebanon to make progress on the issue based on priorities set by both sides as announced also at the conclusion of the Lebanese-Syrian summit held in Damascus on 13 and 14 August this year. We encourage the two countries to materialize that commitment, in particular in those areas where the border is uncertain or disputed, in the best interests of both States.

We remain concerned by the general porosity of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which renders it easy to penetrate. The vulnerability of that border is reflected by both the permanent presence of paramilitary infrastructures belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada, which straddle the border, and the growing concern of a number of Member States regarding the flow of weapons and fighters. Syria has continued to deny any involvement in effecting breaches of the arms embargo. At the conclusion of the Syrian-Lebanese summit held in Damascus on 13 and 14 August, the two parties agreed to take joint action to improve border security and halt smuggling operations. It is also important that Lebanon and Syria take tangible steps towards implementing the other aspects of the agreements reached in Damascus in August.

Over the reporting period, Israeli aircraft have continued to violate Lebanese airspace. The Government of Israel has continued to claim that those overflights are carried out for security reasons. We have regularly called on Israel to cease those overflights, which violate Lebanese sovereignty and Security Council resolutions. Israel continues to occupy the northern part of Ghajar, which constitutes a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006). The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is actively working with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israeli Defense Forces to find an early solution to that matter.

On 16 October the Secretary-General received a letter from Prime Minister Siniora of Lebanon, in which he expressed concern at the threats by Israel against Lebanon. The Secretary-General is indeed disturbed by the escalation of threats, through the media, between Israel and Hizbullah. He urges all

parties to cease that public discourse, which creates anxiety among civilian populations on both sides.

Despite the progress achieved in some key aspects of the resolution, other elements pertaining directly to the sovereignty, stability and territorial integrity of the Lebanese State remain unimplemented. The violence that erupted in Lebanon and spread widely across the country in May of this year served as a shocking illustration of how armed groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon brought the country to a state of near collapse. The events engraved psychological scars on the civilian population.

Regrettably, over the reporting period there has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of militias as called for by the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). The most significant Lebanese militia is the armed component of Hizbullah. That organization maintains a massive paramilitary infrastructure separate from the State, including a secure network of communication, which the group itself deems an integral part of its arsenal. In May of this year, Hizbullah employed civil disobedience but also elements of its military assets to protect that very structure. Those assets and Hizbullah's resort to armed action in response to a political decision by the Government were a direct challenge to the fundamental authority of the Government and its attempts to consolidate its sovereignty.

The Secretary-General calls on Hizbullah to comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and urges all parties that maintain close ties with it, in particular Syria and Iran, to support its transformation into a political party proper, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004).

The Secretary-General is gravely concerned by the possibility that the scars left by the clashes last spring may have prompted, if not accelerated, a process of rearmament in Lebanon. That activity and the continued presence of groups with military and paramilitary capacities threaten the holding of the free and fair parliamentary elections scheduled for next spring. We support the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to ensure a stable security environment in which those elections can be held.

I am pleased to report to the Security Council that as an integral part of the Doha Agreement, the Lebanese leaders committed themselves to prohibit the use of weapons or violence in any internal conflict that may arise. That and the ensuing national dialogue under the leadership of President Sleiman have provided Lebanon's leaders with a new opportunity to recommit themselves to strengthening the sovereignty of the State and the authority of the Lebanese Government throughout its territory.

The Secretary-General has welcomed the first session of the dialogue, which began by addressing itself to the question of a national defence strategy for Lebanon. In that context, we also welcome several attempts by Lebanese leaders to normalize their relations in the interests of Lebanon's security and political stability. It is my profound hope that those efforts will help prevent further violence throughout the country and lay the foundations for an ongoing and sustainable dialogue. It is important to reiterate today the Secretary-General's call on all Lebanese leaders to fully engage in a spirit of genuine cooperation and to commit themselves to achieving meaningful progress that consolidates Lebanon's stability and sovereignty. That process will also require the constructive engagement of States in the region, which also will benefit from a stable and sovereign Lebanon.

Another serious threat to the stability and sovereignty of Lebanon is posed by non-Lebanese armed groups. The Secretary-General is gravely concerned by the emergence and apparent strengthening of extremist elements and foreign fighters based largely in and around Tripoli. That phenomenon is but another challenge to the consolidation of the Government's authority.

There has been no progress towards the disarming of Palestinian militias in accordance with the agreement reached in the Lebanese national dialogue of 2006. We welcome, therefore, the intention expressed by Lebanese leaders at the first session of the dialogue this year. They confirmed the decisions reached in the previous dialogue and expressed their commitment to work towards implementing them.

Of particular concern is the emerging pattern of lethal attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces, one of the most prominent symbols of the authority of the State. We are disturbed by the strengthening of extremist elements and foreign fighters based largely in and around Tripoli. That phenomenon is another challenge that highlights the proliferation of weapons and armed groups that continue to operate in Lebanon

in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). In that regard, I note the assertive action taken and arrests made by the Lebanese security forces of late.

The Secretary-General would like to commend the efforts of the Ministerial Committee of the League of Arab States presided over by the Prime Minister of Qatar and the Secretary-General of the League. He wishes in particular to pay tribute to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani for facilitating the Doha Agreement that helped Lebanon to avoid the spectre of a new civil war. Thanks to that accord, Lebanon was able to make major strides towards the affirmation of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

The Secretary-General reiterates his conviction that the disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias should take place through a political process that will lead to the monopoly on the use of force by the Government of Lebanon throughout all of its territory. I believe that there exists in Lebanon today the possibility for the country's leaders to engage in a process that addresses those issues, which remain at the core of the Lebanese agenda. Achieving meaningful progress in that regard is not only urgent but also possible, should all sides continue to adhere by their commitments to refrain from violence to settle political differences and commit themselves to a Lebanese political process that safeguards the county's sovereignty, stability and constitution.

Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) remains an international support mechanism for the implementation by the Lebanese of the relevant provisions and understandings reached in the Taif Agreement, namely, that all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias disband, disarm and relinquish their military capacities. That understanding must be preserved and implemented to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese.

The Secretary-General is keenly aware of the interlinkages between the various conflicts in the region. It is indeed his profound belief that all possible efforts must be exerted to attain a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for all peoples in the Middle East, consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Roed-Larsen for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.